

The National Captioning Institute was founded in 1979 as a nonprofit corporation with the mission of ensuring that deaf and hard-of-hearing people have access to television through the technology of closed captioning. Prior to this time, captioned television was offered on an extremely limited basis, and the captions were "open", resembling subtitles, an obtrusive system roundly rejected by broadcasters and audiences alike. NCI pioneered the closed-caption technology in which captions could be accessed through special decoder units. This revolutionary solution made it possible for both hearing and hearing impaired audiences to enjoy television programming at the same time, and made the goal of accessible television a reality. Since the first, nationally broadcast closed captioned television programs appeared in 1980—an event so momentous that it was announced by the White House and made international headlines—tens of millions of deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans have been able to access television for entertainment and news content every day.

With the anniversary of September 11, 2001 this past week, we are reminded of the special importance of captioned television in the case of national emergencies. On that terrible day, NCI's dedicated captioners remained on the air for countless hours over a period of several days, captioning in real time the event and its harrowing aftermath for millions of Americans who, without NCI's work, would not have been able to fully comprehend the attacks and their profound impact.

It is estimated that more than 100 million Americans benefit from captioned programming. These audiences include 28 million people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing; children and adults learning to read; and those learning English as a second language. Hearing and non-hearing audiences are most likely to use closed captioning in their homes, although the system is embedded throughout today's society in public spaces such as bars, gyms and airports. As part of NCI's commitment to providing media access to everyone, NCI is making great advances in the development and application of described video technology, a service that provides an audio description of the visual elements of video programming for people who are blind or have low vision, which is an audience of more than 14 million people.

The span of NCI's perseverance and dedication extends far beyond technology for our televisions. NCI established the Nation's only free consumer help desk for communications access issues where citizens may pose questions on topics such as the availability of captioned programming, how to resolve problems with displaying captions, accessibility of closed captions with digital cable and high definition television, and the availability of closed captions in Spanish and on DVDs and home videos.

In addition to its technologic achievements, NCI recently took the lead on auditing how the entire captioning industry is performing. It commissioned the field's first study to evaluate the quality, availability and use of the Nation's captioning services in order to improve performance throughout the entire captioning industry.

In light of all of the above achievements, I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this bill and demonstrate our support for the National Captioning Institute's dedication to improving media access to millions of our fellow Americans.

CONDEMNING TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST RUSSIAN FEDERATION

SPEECH OF

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 13, 2004

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California, Mr. ROYCE, as well as Chairman HYDE and Mr. LANTOS from the International Relations Committee, for bringing this resolution before us today.

In recent weeks the world watched in shock and horror as terrorists brought down two Russian aircraft and detonated a deadly bomb at a Moscow train station. Russia is no stranger to the global war on terror; still the devastation and timing of these attacks were notable and shook the confidence of the Russian people.

But nothing prepared the world for the unspeakable act that was perpetrated in Beslan beginning the morning of September 1. On their way to the celebrate the first day of school, more than 1,100 schoolchildren, parents and teachers were taken hostage by approximately 30 armed terrorists. These innocent men, women and children were inhumanely held with no food or water for more than 52 hours, and their treatment at the hands of these terrorists was savage and cruel.

Tragically, the siege ended in a hail of bullets and series of explosions. In the end more than 355 innocent hostages were killed, including 156 children. Nearly 200 persons still remain unaccounted for amid the rubble of the school.

Let there be no mistake. These were not the actions of rebels or freedom fighters; these were the despicable and abhorrent acts of terrorists. As the Russian people attempt to come to terms with their loss and cope with the anguish inflicted by these loathsome individuals, may they find comfort in knowing they are in the thoughts and prayers of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, the heart-wrenching scenes of parents frantically searching for missing children, or mourning the loss of their children have steeled the resolve of the United States to stand with the people of Russia, and rededicate ourselves to rooting out these cowardly terrorists from every corner of the world.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO BERNADETTE GRAY

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that one of my constituents has been given the inaugural Outstanding Caseworker of the Year award. Bernadette Gray's service was crucial in creating collaboration between Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and the Arapahoe County Human Services.

Through a unanimous decision by the staff members of both organizations, the Outstanding Caseworker of the Year award was

created specifically for Ms. Gray. The award is the first of its kind in the 20-year history of CASA. Collaboration between the two organizations helps both to meet the needs of the families and children that they serve. Bernadette has worked tirelessly on child advocacy cases; building coalitions between volunteers, parents and children to ensure the children are best served and protected.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud Bernadette Gray for her valuable work. She has set a new standard in the field of casework and has proved her self to be a valued asset to the county government. I wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

IN RECOGNITION OF ALEX MEHRAN, CORPORATE LEADER OF THE YEAR

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me today in saluting Alex Mehran, who will be named Corporate Leader of the Year for Contra Costa County at the AFL-CIO's Labor-2-Labor dinner in my congressional district on September 17, 2004. Mr. Mehran earned this honor due to his continued leadership within our community on such issues as housing, transportation and the creation of quality jobs for America's working families.

As President and Chief Executive Officer of Sunset Development Company, Alex has built the largest, most diverse business center in the San Francisco Bay region. That development, Bishop Ranch, contains over 350 companies that employ over 30,000 people. In order to provide the housing and transportation choices these employees, and others throughout the region, need, Alex Mehran has provided dynamic leadership on a number of initiatives to address these issues.

As Chairman of the Contra Costa Economic Partnership he has helped to create a unique collaboration of public and private partnerships to promote economic development strategies that support a higher quality of life for the region's residents.

Alex has shown his commitment to making the "American Dream" available to all of our community's residents by creating learning opportunities for immigrant workers at his job sites so they can gain the English skills needed to fully participate in our society.

For our system to truly work, we must have corporate leaders like Alex Mehran who understand our great society's health depends on each of our hard-working residents having the opportunity to enjoy the quality of life we all work so hard to create.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR FREEDOM IN HONG KONG

SPEECH OF

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 13, 2004

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, the results of the elections in Hong Kong on September 12